THE BODY OF GOD

First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology

by ERIC GUTKIND

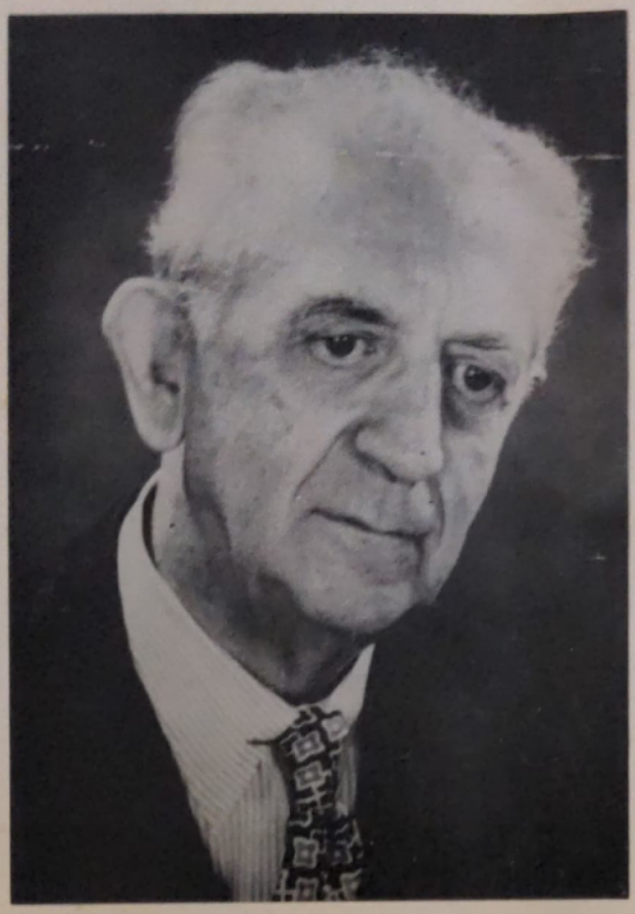
Edited by LUCIE B. GUTKIND and HENRY LE ROY FINCH

ERIC GUTKIND

THE BODY OF GOD

First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology

HORIZON



Eric Gutkind belonged to the circle of European intellectuals which included Walter Benjamin, Martin Buber, L. E. J. Brouwer, Henri Borel and Friedrich van Eeden. His first book, *Siderische Geburt (Sidereal Birth)*, published in Berlin in 1910, served as a focal point for this group and later became the philosophical manifesto for the New Europe Groups organized in London in the 1920's by the Yugoslavian teacher Dimitrije Mitrinovic, which attracted such men as Sir Patrick Geddes, Sir Frederick Soddy and John Cowper Powys. (Large selections from that book, previously circulated in English only in manuscript, are here published for the first time.) His second book, *The Absolute Collective*, published in London in 1937, was hailed by Henry Miller as "true in the highest sense, entirely on the side of life."

Eric Gutkind was born in Berlin and educated at the Humanistic Gymnasium and the University of Berlin. He studied anthropolgy with J. J. Bachofen, and also worked in philosophy, mathematics, the sciences and the history of art. Starting with a vision of history having something in common with ancient Gnosticism, he became increasingly interested in Jewish philosophy and formulated his ideas in terms of concepts drawn from the Kabbala.

When he came to the United States in 1933 and began teaching at the New School and the College of the City of New York, Eric Gutkind already had an influential following. This third book, *Choose Life*, published in the United States in 1952, was a reinterpretation of traditional Judaism which drew to his lectures many students dissatisfied with both liberalism and orthodoxy and looking for something more concrete and dynamic than both. (Transcripts of several of these lectures are also included in this volume.) He died in Chatauqua, New York, on August 26, 1965.

The recent inspired writings of one of the genuine visionaries and prophets of the modern world have here been combined with a representative selection of earlier writings, most of them not previously published in English. The result is a revelation, ranging across an entire lifetime, of a mind which has been described as "drowned in light" and "lucid to the point of ecstasy."

As a visionary Eric Gutkind was concrete and materialistic, concerned equally with "physiological religion," cybernetics and Marxism as well as with the discoveries of modern science, logic and mathematics. To have linked all this with the wisdom of the Kabbala, given it a strikingly contemporary interpretation, and integrated it into a single constructive vision, was an achievement unique in scope and intensity.

In aphorisms of startling simplicity Gutkind confronted the deeper meaning of the world situation, breaking through it into a new and more concrete "worldliness." In a way particularly important to the present younger generation he foresaw an age "reaching the Now" and "coming into the presence of the world." Although couched in a language highly personal and traditional, his vision was universal, opening vistas of hope and insight more "modern" than tomorrow.

Gutkind saw in technology the opportunity for the

(continued on back flap)

$6.95

(continued from front flap)

emergence of man. He met the problem of the "raging technology" and the "technical existence" which threatens the human race, not by retreat or romantic rejection, but by wholehearted "embracement" which lifts the technological world up into a new human dimension. The "beyond of this world here and now" was the focus of his vision. We do not, he said, have to get out of the world; we have to get into the world. Gutkind has given us a sense of renewal, a philosophy intensely meaningful in this searching time.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Lucie B. Gutkind, wife of Eric Gutkind, was born and educated in Berlin. For several years she taught physical education according to the Mensendieck System, but her foremost interest has been the field of languages and translation. She is a translator of the writings of Henri Borel and Hjalmar Wiek as well as of those of her husband.

Henry LeRoy Finch has been a member of the philosophy faculty of Sarah Lawrence College since 1952. He is a graduate of Yale University and holds an MA and a PhD in philosophy from Columbia. He is the author of a forthcoming book on the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

Horizon Press 156 Fifth Avenue New York 10010

ERIC GUTKIND THE BODY OF GOD HORIZON